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AUTHOR	Miller, Geri; Elliott, Ellen; Finch, Jennifer; Kirkley, Dale; Litten, DeLillian; Nunn, David; Brown, Jacky; Lassiter, Pam
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ABSTRACT

At the 2002 American Counseling Association Conference, eight individuals presented their experiences in classroom collaboration among four different settings (university classroom, university counseling wellness center, community college classroom, addiction counseling treatment center). Student activities, that were a part of the graduate classroom assignments, consisted of: administering a campus wide alcohol/drug use survey, presenting to a community college class, and conducting interviews at an addiction treatment center. The presentation panel was diverse in terms of: gender, degree type and level, amount of counseling experience (beginning to over twenty years), training level (bachelor's through doctoral), and professional roles (four students, one university professor, one university addiction counselor wellness coordinator, one community college teacher, and one addiction treatment counselor director). (Author)

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Running head: TRAINING ADDICTION COUNSELORS

Training Addiction Counselors: Collaborating through Diversity

Geri Miller, Ellen Elliott, Jennifer Finch, Dale Kirkley, DeLillian Litten, and David Nunn
Appalachian State University

Jacky Brown
Wilkes Community College

Pam Lassiter
Julian Keith Alcohol & Drug Treatment Center

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Abstract

At the 2002 American Counseling Association Conference, eight individuals (four professionals, four graduate counseling students) presented their experiences in classroom collaboration among four different settings (university classroom, university counseling wellness center, community college classroom, addiction counseling treatment center). Student activities, that were a part of the graduate classroom assignments, consisted of: administering a campus wide alcohol/drug use survey, presenting to a community college class, and conducting interviews at an addiction treatment center. The presentation panel was diverse in terms of: gender, degree type and level, amount of counseling experience (beginning to over twenty years), training level (bachelor's through doctoral), and professional roles (four students, one university professor, one university addiction counselor wellness coordinator, one community college teacher, and one addiction treatment counseling director).

This three credit graduate level class at Appalachian State University, through the Department of Human Development and Psychological Counseling, was titled *Current Issues and Special Populations in Addiction Counseling*. Students took part in three assignments that were intended to assist them in applying theoretical constructs of addiction counseling to the real world setting. These assignments were: administering a campus wide alcohol/drug use survey (8 hour involvement outside of the classroom) presenting to a community college class (3 hour involvement outside of the classroom), and conducting interviews at an addiction treatment center (8 hour involvement outside of the classroom). The four professionals (university professor, university addiction counselor wellness coordinator, community college teacher, and addiction treatment counseling director) discussed how they collaborated with one another and the four students presented their reactions to the collaborative assignments.

Miller provided an overall view of the collaborative classroom experience from the university professor perspective. The goal of the collaboration was to provide students with the professional experiences of participating in research, presenting to an audience, and conducting an interview with a client within the context of the addictions field of counseling. Specific suggestions were made to enhance successful collaboration in terms of the site, classroom, and the counselor educator.

With regard to the site, Miller recommended the following:

1. Have a primary contact person who is honest and responsible.
2. Meet face-to-face with the primary contact person during planning stages.
3. Provide the contact person with a copy of the syllabus and a description of the students.

4. Determine mutually beneficial goals.

5. Determine the number of students who can be adequately involved in terms of the primary contact person's system.

6. Process the experience with the primary contact person after it is completed.

In terms of the classroom, Miller recommended the following:

1. Organize the syllabus to allow for outside time such as driving time to the site.

2. Instruct students on how to dress and act professionally.

3. Provide students with directions to the site or assist them in organizing transportation.

4. Provide students with a schedule and discuss how expenses such as lunch and gas will be handled.

5. Provide class time for students to process their experiences.

6. Give students feedback on their behavior and the impact of their behavior on others.

Finally, Miller suggested that counselor educators, who want to involve such professional experiences in conjunction with the classroom, ask themselves these three questions: a) How can this experience be done in my setting?, b) With whom can I collaborate on such an experience, and c) What are potential barriers and bridges to being involved with such collaboration? With these contextual questions in mind, Miller made the following general recommendations to counselor educators who set up such collaborative experiences:

1. Be prepared for the unexpected.

2. Be honest and respectful toward both the contacts and the students.

3. Confront students as needed on inappropriate behavior, but do so privately.

4. Have ongoing contact with the contact person prior to and following the assignment.

The remainder of the presentation involved a discussion of the assignments from the viewpoints of the different roles of the eight presenters. Each assignment will be summarized separately.

University Alcohol/Drug Use Survey

The graduate students assisted in the administration of the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment through the Alcohol and Drug Assistance Program of the Appalachian State University Counseling and Psychological Services Center. Kirkley, who was the contact person for this project, set up the overall survey structure (consulting with appropriate professionals, receiving Institutional Review Board approval, involving faculty in survey participation) and then coordinated this structure with the class. This coordination involved: a) coordinating class schedules with graduate students' schedules, b) developing an instruction sheet for graduate student administrators, and c) providing the necessary packets for administration. Kirkley came the first day of the class to let students know about the project and explain the survey structure, came a few weeks later to coordinate the structure with the class, and then came near the end of the semester to report the results of the survey. This process allowed the students to see a research project from beginning to end.

The graduate students showed their interest and motivation in this project by being very responsible and careful in their survey involvement. They provided feedback to Kirkley and Miller that their involvement helped them understand research in the addiction counseling field better and that they felt that they had made a difference in their university setting. They highly recommended that such an activity be done again.

Community College Class Presentation

Miller opened up the community college class presentation with an overview of the university addiction counseling program and then the four students introduced themselves (name, degree emphasis, length of involvement in the university program, future professional plans) before opening up the presentation for a question and answer period.

The community college class was called *Introduction to Psychology* and had 15 students who were working on their A.A. degree. Brown's goals, as the teacher, were to provide the students with role models of individuals for advanced degrees and have the students teach each other. These goals were particularly important because at this community college, many of the students were of nontraditional age working on an A.A. degree in order to obtain a pay raise and not planning on pursuing a degree beyond the A.A. level. The intent of the presentation was to create an atmosphere that encouraged dialogue between the two groups of students and reinforced the community college students in thinking differently, having confidence in themselves and their intelligence, experiencing student interaction as a core of learning, and being exposed to perspectives different from their own.

Prior to the presentation, Brown provided the graduate students with the following directions: "Feel free to discuss your own experiences in graduate school. The students do not know what topics you will be discussing. I have only listed some topics that might provide you with some guidelines." These directions were relayed to the graduate students prior to their presentation alongwith this list of questions from Brown's students:

1. Why do you stay in school?
2. What have you learned about yourself by being in school?
3. How have you learned to live with having your personal views and values challenged in

school?

4. If you are Christian, how has school been hard on these religious views?

The presentation was highly successful for both groups of students. All the students took the presentation seriously, were attentive throughout the presentation, and stayed the entire time. Most of the community college students asked questions and even without knowing the addiction counseling "vocabulary", they risked forming and vocalizing their questions to students who they viewed as having more expertise in this area than themselves. The graduate students spoke of how rewarding this experience was in that they began to realize how much they had learned in graduate school about the area of addictions.

Addiction Treatment Center Interviews

In this classroom assignment, all the students interviewed clients at an addiction counseling treatment center. Lassiter used three questions to organize the collaboration: a) How can this experience benefit staff as well as students visiting?, b) How can we provide professional modeling?, and c) How can we organize and implement this experience in a way that is respectful to clients personally and culturally? The goals of the visit were to have the staff benefit as well as the students by having a mentoring experience and exploring diversity in the addictions counseling field.

Lassiter outlined the following as important aspects in preparation for such a visit:

1. Enlist cooperation and input from staff when designing the experience.
2. Inform superiors and administration well in advance and enlist their support: abide by all confidentiality and informed consent requirements, outline and communicate benefits to the agency.

3. Attend to space needs and other logistical matters.
4. Organize and structure time well to maximize benefit.
5. Communicate the purpose and goals of site visit to all personnel impacted.
6. Ask for a copy of the course syllabus, goals and objectives of the site visit, and suggestions from the course instructor.

During the onsite experience, Lassiter recommended that in addition to providing the opportunity for interviewing an addicted client that students be involved in other aspects of agency work. These other aspects include review of agency mission handouts, live observation of clinical work, opportunities to highlight competencies of both students and staff, and group processing time for the experience which includes feedback on what is helpful and what can be improved.

Once again students demonstrated their interest in this exercise by being very responsible and respectful in their behavior toward clients, staff, and the agency. They again recommended to Miller that such an activity be routinely involved in the assignments for this class and/or other classes involving addiction counseling.

The use of these three classroom assignments demonstrated the benefits of creating bridges between theory and practice in the addictions field. The professor, students, and the agency personnel all received the rewards of this bridge by engaging in meaningful, collaborative activity that assisted in learning and making a difference in the lives of addicted individuals and their loved ones.

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Signature: Geraldine (Geri) D. Miller	Printed Name/Position/Title: Geri Miller, Professor, Ph.D
Organization/Address: Dept. of HPC, Edwin Duncan Hall, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608	Telephone: 828-262-6048 FAX: 828-262-2108
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